

## **Sen. Dianne Feinstein – Press Release on San Francisco Bay**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

Wednesday, June 30, 2010

### **Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Approves Feinstein-Boxer Legislation to Authorize Ten Years of Funding for EPA to Continue Wetlands Restoration in the San Francisco Bay**

**Washington, DC** – The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee today approved legislation sponsored by U.S. Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer (both D-Calif.) to authorize ten years of funding for the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) to continue wetlands restoration projects and improve water quality in the San Francisco Bay and its watershed.

The Environment and Public Works Committee, which is chaired by Senator Boxer, today approved the Feinstein-Boxer legislation by voice vote during a full committee meeting to consider a number of pending bills. The legislation was introduced by Senators Feinstein and Boxer late last week, and now goes to the full Senate for consideration.

The committee-approved legislation (S.3539) would authorize a consistent stream of funding for EPA's ongoing restoration projects in the Bay. Over the last three years, Senator Feinstein, who chairs the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, the Environment and Related Agencies, has helped to secure \$17 million in funding for the EPA to conduct ecosystem restoration and water quality work in the San Francisco Bay. To date, these projects have helped to restore wetlands and to improve runoff systems for urban areas and stormwater.

**“A healthy San Francisco Bay is not only vital to the region, it is also critical to the State's economic and ecological future. There is nothing more important to the Bay's health, in my opinion, than restoring tidal wetlands and improving water quality. That's why I've helped to secure \$17 million in funding for EPA to do these types of restoration projects in the Bay Area, and an additional \$15 million for Fish and Wildlife Service to restore tidal wetlands at the former Cargill salt ponds,”** Senator Feinstein said. **“I'm delighted to work with Senator Boxer, my friend and colleague, on this legislation to authorize a consistent stream of funding that would enable EPA to continue its important restoration and water quality projects in San Francisco's celebrated Bay for the next ten years, and I thank her for the Committee's timely action to approve this bill.”**

Senator Boxer said, **“San Francisco Bay is important to the economy and the environment of the whole region. Senator Feinstein and I share a commitment to protecting and restoring the health of the Bay, and I am so pleased to work together with her to move forward on legislation to ensure the resources are available to restore the estuary's vital wetlands and continue the process of improving water quality.”**

Specifically, the legislation amends Section 123 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1961 to authorize EPA funding from Fiscal Year 2011 through Fiscal Year 2020, consistent with the San Francisco Estuary Program's Comprehensive Conservation and Management Program (<http://www.sfestuary.org/pages/index.php?ID=7>).

The legislation prioritizes funding for projects that will:

- Protect and restore vital estuarine habitat for migratory waterfowl, shorebirds, and wildlife; and
  - Improve and restore water quality and rearing habitat for fish.
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In addition to the funding for EPA restoration projects in the Bay, Senator Feinstein has also helped to secure \$15 million in funding since 2006 for the Fish and Wildlife Service to do tidal restoration projects for the Bay's former Cargill salt ponds. In 2003, Senator Feinstein played a key role in brokering a landmark public-private partnership to purchase 16,500 acres of former salt ponds from the Cargill Corporation. In March 2006, via a series of orchestrated levee breaches, several former Cargill ponds were opened to tidal action for the first time in 60 years. So far more than 12,000 acres of wetlands have begun the restoration process, including the 479 acres of salt ponds opened to Bay water.

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## **Sen. Dianne Feinstein – Press Release on Increased Water Allocation for Central Valley Farmers**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Monday, June 14, 2010

### **Statement of Senator Feinstein on Increased Water Allocation for Central Valley Farmers**

“The Department of the Interior today announced another increase in this year’s water supply allocations for Central Valley Project users, and the news is very good.

Farmers on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley will now receive 45 percent of their contractual water supply. This is up from the 40 percent allocation announced last month, and a dramatic increase over the initial allocation of 5 percent announced early this year. As previously announced, farmers in the Sacramento Valley will receive their full contractual allocation.

With each federal allocation announcement this spring, Central Valley farmers have received even greater certainty that they will have sufficient water to plant, hire and harvest this year. This is very welcome news, particularly after three previous years of drought.

This increased allocation is due in large part to a series of heavy spring storms that replenished California’s snowpack levels to above normal levels. But it’s also true that South-of-Delta farmers would be facing a different scenario if it weren’t for the administrative measures announced in February to secure the equivalent of an additional 8 to 10 percent allocation.

There is a long list of people who have dedicated countless hours to alleviate California’s dire water crisis. This includes, in no particular order, Ken Salazar and David Hayes, Secretary and Deputy Secretary of the Interior, respectively; Senator Boxer, along with Representatives Costa and Cardoza; Lester Snow and Mark Cowin from the State of California; the Metropolitan Water District; the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors; and the Friant Water Users Authority. Today’s announcement wouldn’t be possible without the perseverance, creativity, and resourcefulness of all of these individuals and groups.

The challenge that remains before us will be to identify longer-term solutions to restore the health of the fragile Delta, increase water storage, improve water recycling and build new conveyance. The stakes are too high to fail.”

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

Thursday, May 20, 2010

**Senator Feinstein Testifies in Support of Legislation to Balance Conservation, Recreation and Renewable Energy Development in the Mojave Desert**

**Washington, DC** – U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) today testified before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee in support of legislation she has sponsored to balance conservation, recreation and renewable energy development in the Mojave Desert.

The bill, called the California Desert Protection Act of 2010 (S.2921), was introduced by Senator Feinstein last December.

***Following is the text of Senator Feinstein's prepared remarks:***

"I'd like to thank Chairman Bingaman and Ranking Member Murkowski for scheduling this hearing. I very much appreciate the chance to speak about the 'California Desert Protection Act of 2010.'

We have the opportunity and the responsibility to preserve some of the most pristine wilderness-quality lands in the desert. That is why I am here today.

The bill I've introduced would:

- Designate two new national monuments:  
The Mojave Trails National Monument  
The Sand to Snow National Monument
- Add adjacent lands to Joshua Tree and Death Valley National Parks and to Mojave National Preserve;
- Permanently protect 5 wilderness study areas as designated wilderness, and protect 4 important waterways, such as the Amargosa River and Deep Creek, as Wild and Scenic Rivers;

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The bill would also:

- Facilitate renewable development on suitable lands and improve the permitting process for wind and solar development on public and private lands; and
- Enhance recreational opportunities, while ensuring that the training needs of the military are met.

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Following the passage of the Desert Protection Act in 1994, it became evident that the southern part of the Mojave Preserve needed protection. There were literally hundreds of inholdings formerly owned by the Catellus Corporation on which private development could happen.

The Wildlands Conservancy was able to raise \$40 million from the private sector. Together with \$18 million of federal funds, we were able to purchase some 600,000 acres of these former Catellus inholdings.

In February of last year, David Myers of the Wildlands Conservancy came to my office in San

Francisco. He brought with him charts, photographs, and renderings of huge energy proposals intended for these very inholdings that had been purchased to remain in conservation.

Up to that point, the largest solar facility in America was approximately 160 megawatts. Yet I learned that some companies were proposing to build solar facilities of sizes that had never before been built.

One company, in particular, proposed to build an 8 square mile solar facility in Sleeping Beauty Valley -- the picture which you see here today -- which would have generated 800 megawatts.

I should mention that these large solar facilities do alter the landscape. The lands are scraped up, a large tower goes up, fences are installed, and other structures are built. The area is substantially changed.

Last March, I went out to visit the desert. I asked the CEOs of Brightsource, Cogentrix, Southern California Edison, and PG&E to accompany me. We were also joined by the individual company developers from Solel, Florida Power and Light, and Oak Creek Wind.

We spent the day looking at the land, and I think it quickly became apparent that land set aside for conservation had been done so for very good reason.

We saw prime desert tortoise habitat. We drove to the middle of this beautiful valley. We drove down the famous Route 66. We also stopped at the Pisgah lava flow and Amboy Crater.

Over the course of many months, my staff and I met key stakeholders, including federal, state and local officials, environmental groups, renewable energy companies, off-highway recreation enthusiasts, hunters, cattle ranchers, mining interests, the Department of Defense, and California's public utility companies.

We worked hard to incorporate the vast majority of their suggestions. Out of these meetings, this bill emerged.

I believe the bill achieves a careful balance between conserving the desert's pristine heritage, while creating an efficient process for renewable energy development. We also made sure to incorporate lands designated for recreation and military training uses.

So far, we have assembled a diverse coalition of support. I'm very proud that the bill has been sponsored by several energy companies, including:

- Cogentrix Energy
- Abengoa Solar
- Edison International (parent company of Southern California Edison)

Southern California Edison, who will testify today, is one of the largest electricity utilities in the country. It provides power to more than 13 million people across 11 counties in central, coastal and Southern California. They are the largest purchaser of renewable energy in the entire country, particularly solar. Their support is crucial.

One thing we learned through this process is that the federal renewable energy permitting system was broken.

Until recently, the BLM process has operated on a first-come, first-serve basis. And it didn't distinguish between a viable project and a speculative one.

In fact, over the past five years, more than 100 applications have been submitted to build utility-scale renewable energy projects on public lands – and not a single project has received a permit.

Under this status quo, no one wins.

We have written this bill to help fix the system and ensure that the development of wind and solar occurs on suitable lands. We've done this by:

- Streamlining the Bureau of Land Management permitting process for renewable energy development.
  - Seeing that disturbed private lands are not penalized, but can also be used for development.
  - Improving and expanding the existing transmission infrastructure, which runs right through this area.
  - Requiring that, in addition to the BLM, the Forest Service and the Department of Defense evaluate their lands and set up renewable energy development on suitable lands.
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The BLM has identified 350,000 acres in California as solar energy study areas. California needs roughly 120,000 to 150,000 acres to meet the 33 percent renewable electricity goal by 2020 – that goal is the highest of any state. We can easily achieve more than twice that amount through the BLM zones.

Not one acre of the proposed monument is within these BLM solar study zones. The bill also has no negative impact on any of the 9 solar and 3 wind 'fast track' BLM proposals. Nor does it impact the 4,803 megawatts of solar energy under review at the California Energy Commission.

Additionally, there are transmission corridors that can be improved to accommodate renewable power.

I'd like to close by making one final recommendation. I would have no objection if the Committee were to add an amendment to establish a new solar energy study area in the Western Mojave. It is believed that there are literally hundreds of thousands of acres directly north of Edwards Air Force Base, which should be seriously evaluated for solar potential.

I have encouraged the BLM to do this administratively, and I would welcome an amendment by the Committee in this bill to achieve that.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak before you today. And I hope that you will join me in supporting the bill, and moving it towards enactment."

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